DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 585 CS 508 119

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TITLE Conflict Communication: Intimate Relationships, 1986-1990. A Selected, Annotated Bibliography.
INSTITUTION Speech Communication Association, Annandale, Va.
PUB DATE Oct 90
NOTE 5p.
AVAILABLE FROM Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Road, Building E, Annandale, VA 22003 (1-5 copies, $1; 6-15 copies, $2; more than 15, $3).
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; *Conflict; Conflict Resolution; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Intimacy; Speech Communication
IDENTIFIERS Communication Strategies; Conflict Management

ABSTRACT

This bibliography presents annotations of 28 selected items (mostly journal articles) which deal with conflict communication in intimate relationships. It updates a similar bibliography on conflict management and resolution in close personal relationships published in 1986. (SR)

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CONFLICT COMMUNICATION: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS, 1986-1990

A Selected, Annotated Bibliography

Prepared by

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ED355585

This list of sources updates a bibliography on conflict management and resolution in close, personal relationships distributed in 1986.

Alberts, J.K. (1988). An analysis of couples' conversational complaints. Communication Monographs, 55, 184-197. Behavioral coding showed that 40 adjusted couples (married/living together) manifested behavioral complaints, positive affect, and agreement responses, while maladjusted couples engaged in personal complaints, negative affect, and countercomplaint responses.

Billingham, R.E., & Sack, A.R. (1987). Conflict tactics and the level of emotional commitment among unmarrieds. Human Relations, 40, 59-74. Self-report data revealed that at the point that 650 college students increased emotional commitment and decided that their partners were potential mates, major distortions occurred in how they viewed the partners' conflict tactics.

Brown, L.S., & Zimmer, D. (1986). An introduction to therapy issues of lesbian and gay male couples. In N.S. Jacobson & A.S. Gurman (Eds.), Clinical handbook of marital therapy (pp. 451-468). New York: Guilford. An essay on the distinctive features of gay and lesbian relationships and sources of conflict unique to them.

Buss, D.M. (1989). Conflict between the sexes: Strategic interference and evocation of anger and upset. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56, 735-747. Self-reported complaints about the opposite sex fell into 15 categories with each sex emphasizing different sources of conflict.

Buttny, R. (1990). Blame-account sequences in therapy: The negotiation of relational meanings. Semiotica, 78, 219-247. Coding a couple in therapy, the author provides a description of how blames and accounts are used by husband, wife, and therapist. Therapist broke recurring patterns by "reframing" partners' punctuation of events.

CS506119

Cahn, D. (1990). Intimates in conflict. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Edited volume contains a review of the literature on intimates in conflict with suggestions for future research by Cahn, coded nonverbal conflict behaviors by Newton/Burgoon and behaviorally coded use of humor in couples' conflict by Alberts, self-report data on alternatives to conflicts in friends and on dissatisfied friends use of social networks obtained by Healey/Bell, on conflict avoidance by Roloff/Cloven, and on conflict behaviors that may produce perceived understanding-

misunderstanding by Cahn. Program summaries are also included by Burrell/Fitzpatrick on conflict according to marital type and Zillmann regarding aggravated conflict. The volume also contains essays by Fontaine dealing with intimate intercultural conflict and by Remer/de Mesquita on teaching confrontation skills.

Canary, D.J., & Cupach, W.R. (1988). Relational and episodic characteristics associated with conflict tactics. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5, 305-325. Self-report data was obtained from 244 college students and their relational partners (romantic partner, close friends, friends, and roommates). In contrast to distributive and avoidance tactics, integrative tactics produced communication satisfaction, and the partner was viewed as more competent which in turn produced greater control mutuality, trust, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction.

Canary, D.J., & Spitzberg, B.H. (1987). Appropriateness and effectiveness perceptions of conflict strategies. Human Communication Research, 14, 93-118. In contrast to distributive and avoidance tactics, self-report data showed that integrative tactics were most effective in both same sex and opposite sex romantic relationships, while distributive tactics were considered to be inappropriate in both types of relationships.

Chusmir, L.H., & Mills, J. (1989). Gender differences in conflict resolution styles of managers: At work and at home. Sex Roles, 20, 149-163. For 201 managers, self-report data revealed that both genders tended to handle conflict more competitively at work than at home and used the accommodation style more frequently at home than at work.

Coleman, D.H., & Straus, M.A. (1986). Marital power, conflict, and violence in a nationally representative sample of American couples. Violence and Victims, 1, 141-157. Using self-report data from 2,143 married couples, the authors found that equal spouses had the lowest rates of conflict and violence, while male-dominated and female-dominated couples had the highest rates.

Donohue, W.A., Allen, M., & Burrell, N. (1988). Mediator communicative competence. Communication Monographs, 55, 104-119. Behaviorally coded data of mediated conflicts regarding child custody/visitation between 20 pre- and post-divorce couples indicated that mediators' structuring and reframing strategies and tactics discriminated most between ten cases reaching agreement and ten failing to do so.

Gottman, J.M. (1990). Finding the laws of close personal relationships. In I.E. Sigel & G.H. Brody (Eds.), Methods of family research: Biographies of research projects I: Normal Families (pp. 249-263). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Compared to satisfied/nontherapy couples, many studies found that dissatisfied/therapy-seeking couples have more negative affect; more negative affect reciprocity; and more structured conflict interactions. Moreover, physiological arousal in marital conflict is highly predictive of declines in levels of marital satisfaction three years later. Finally, males show a larger ANS response to stress, respond more readily, and recover more slowly than females, suggesting that men may want to avoid upsetting situations more than women.

Jones, T.S. (1988). Phase structures in agreement and no-agreement mediation. Communication Research, 15, 470-495. Behavioral coding of mediated conflicts over child custody/visitation between 36 pre- and post-divorce couples showed that 18 reaching no agreement were characterized by a continuing emphasis on information exchange throughout mediation and by a de-emphasis on problem-solving and resolution behaviors, whereas 18 reaching agreement progressed from differentiation to integration through information-exchange, problem-solving, and finally resolution behaviors.

Kurdek, L.A. (1989). Relationship quality in gay and lesbian cohabiting couples: A 1-year follow-up study. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6, 39-59. In addition to providing general information on gay and lesbian relationships, the author presents self-report data to show that predictors of relationship quality include satisfaction with social support, high expressiveness, and few beliefs that disagreement is destructive to a relationship.

Launius, M.H., & Jensen, B.L. (1987). Interpersonal problem-solving skills in battered, counseling, and control women. Journal of Family Violence, 2, 151-161. Battered women showed general problem-solving skills deficit more than other women.

Lloyd, S.A. (1987). Conflict in premarital relationships: Differential perceptions of males and females. Family Relations, 36, 290-294. Daily observation records of 25 premarital couples were combined with other self-reports to show that the number of conflicts and their perceived resolution were most important to females, whereas the number and stability of conflicts were the most important to males.

Lloyd, S.A. (1990). A behavioral self-report technique for assessing conflict in close relationships. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7, 265-272. Daily observation of 25 premarital couples and other self-reports indicated that disengaging partners reported greater stability of the conflict issue than continuing partners.

Margolin, G. (1990). Marital conflict. In G.H. Brody & I.E. Sigel (Eds.). Methods of Family Research: Biographies of Research Projects II: Clinical Populations (pp. 191-225). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. An excellent discussion of behaviorally coded studies of distressed married couples complete with many methodological suggestions.

Margolin, G., Burman, B., & John, R.S. (1989). Home observations of married couples reenacting naturalistic conflicts. Behavioral Assessment, 11, 101-118. Authors use a self-report to identify different types of "distressed married couples:" physically aggressive (PA), verbally aggressive (VA), and withdrawn (WI). Then using behaviorally coded data, they show that PA spouses were most hostile physically. They also found that WI spouses showed the greatest increases in despair over time.

Miller, P.C., Lefcourt, H.M., Holmes, J.G., Ware, E.E., & Saleh, W.E. (1986). Marital locus of control and marital problem solving. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 161-169. Behaviorally coded conflict interactions of 88 Canadian married couples revealed that internals were more active and direct in their problem solving and more satisfied with their marriages than were externals.

Newell, S.E., & Stutman, R.K. (1988). The social confrontation episode. Communication Monographs, 55, 266-285. Developed over a series of studies, the authors present a model for the successful resolution of problematic situations where an actor signals another that he/she has violated a rule or expectation for appropriate conduct within the relationship or situation.

Pistole, C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6, 505-510. Compared to less secure couples, securely attached romantic partners reported higher relationship satisfaction and were more likely to report the use of an integrating conflict resolution strategy (n=137 undergraduate students).

Roloff, M.E. (1987). Communication and conflict. In C.R. Berger & S.H. Chaffee (Eds.), Handbook of communication science (pp. 484-534). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. The author identifies general patterns of conflict across four levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and mass communication. In the interpersonal section, he includes intimate relationships and discusses differing perceptions of conflict and overt communication behaviors.

Sternberg, R.J., & Dobson, D.M. (1987). Resolving interpersonal conflicts: An analysis of stylistic consistency. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52, 794-812. In three studies, undergraduates reported using the same conflict resolution styles across relationships (with same-sex peers, opposite-sex peers, parents, teachers, roommates, and romantic partners), but individuals differed from one another in preferences for a particular style of conflict.

Swingle, P.G. (1989). The resolution of conflict. Canadian Psychology, 30, 650-661. In a discussion of the effects of predisposition, structure, and experience on interpersonal conflict (including marital), the author uses a review of game theory studies to argue that structure is the overriding influence.

Van Buren, D.J., & Williamson, D.A. (1988). Marital relationships and conflict resolution skills of bulimics. International Journal of Eating Disorders, 7, 735-741. In a study of 12 bulimic, 14 distressed, 15 nondistressed, nonbulimic married couples, bulimics were found to be similar to females in distressed marriages in their self-reported use of few problem-solving skills, withdrawal from conflict, and dysfunctional belief that "partners cannot change."

White, B.B. (1989). Gender differences in marital communication patterns. Family Process, 28, 89-106. Behaviorally coded conflict interactions involving 56 married couples showed that men tended to be more coercive, while women were more affiliative.

Zietlow, P.H., & Sillars, A.L. (1988). Life stage differences in communication during marital conflicts. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5, 223-245. Audiotapes of 49 married couples discussing problems were behaviorally coded to show that couples at different life stages use different types of statements varying in degree of confrontation. More specifically, younger couples had a more intense, engagement style of conflict interaction.